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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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NORTH CENTRAL IDAHO TO GET EXPANDED VETERANS' SERVICES

Lewiston clinic expanding from two days a month to five days a week

BOISE, Idaho -- The veterans of north central Idaho will see a significant expansion of health care services in the coming year, Idaho Senator Larry E. Craig announced today.

Under the terms of the agreement, the details of which are still being worked out locally, the Veterans Administration would operate a community-based outpatient clinic five days per week every week. Further, the clinic would offer some mental health services in addition to serving the primary care needs of area veterans.

"The decision by VA to expand services in Lewiston will greatly improve the lives of thousands of Idaho veterans. I want to thank VA Secretary Jim Nicholson and VISN 20 Director Max Lewis for their willingness to hear my concerns and – more importantly – respond to the needs of the veterans of north central Idaho," said Craig, who currently serves as Chairman of the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

"This is wonderful news -- not just for the veterans in Lewiston, but for all veterans in the surrounding communities. The expanded access to medical services will also help with the economic development of the area."

The clinic will also serve nearby residents of Washington and Oregon. Currently, VA operates a clinic two days per month in Lewiston which provides only primary health care services for local veterans. Once VA is able to identify appropriate space and hire more staff, the clinic would be open five days per week, every week. The process of identifying space and hiring staff could take several months and VA officials do not expect the clinic to be fully operational before Fall 2007.